

Intervention: Training and educational programs to increase cultural awareness and competency among oral health care providers

Finding: Insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness

Potential partners to undertake the intervention:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofits or local coalitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Businesses or labor organizations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Schools or universities | <input type="checkbox"/> Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health care providers | <input type="checkbox"/> Local public health departments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State public health departments | <input type="checkbox"/> Policymakers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals, clinics or managed care organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Background on the intervention:

Oral health experts and academics agree that rural, low-income, and minority communities typically suffer from poor access to oral health care. People with disabilities also face significant barriers to access. The Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) recommends developing training and education programs that increase cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency among oral health care providers to help prepare practitioners to better serve these communities and individuals. Suggested program formats include:

- Expanding dental school programs and dental hygiene school programs to expose students to diverse populations
- Partnering with state dental associations and dental hygiene associations to develop and administer continuing education programs on cultural competency and issues related to special populations

Findings from the systematic reviews:

There was insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness for this intervention. Practices that lack sufficient research to support effectiveness should not be confused with ineffective programs. Rather, they should be recognized as programs that have the potential to become evidence-based practices—if properly evaluated. Practitioners are encouraged to monitor the impact of these programs in their communities and report on their findings in order to build a base of knowledge sufficient to reach consensus.

Limitations/Comments:

ASTDD considers the strategies listed above to be “Best Practice Approaches” to increasing access to oral health care through workforce development. In order to be recognized as a proven Best Practice Approach, an intervention’s effectiveness would need to be supported by research, expert opinion, field lessons, and theoretical rationale. However, as both research and field studies examining factors that contribute to disparities in oral health care are only beginning, these interventions are considered “promising practices,” or practices that have not yet been demonstrated to be effective (or ineffective).

Additional information:

Descriptions of programs that incorporate the strategies outlined above are available in [Figure One](#) of ASTDD’s Access to Oral Health Care Services: Workforce Development Best Practice Approaches Report. Available online at: www.astdd.org/docs/BPAAccessWorkforce.pdf.

References:

Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD). Best practice approaches for state and community oral health programs: access to oral health care services—workforce development. 2005. Available online at: www.astdd.org/index.php?template=full_listing.html&shell=best. Accessed June 25, 2005.